Luc Deleu, Verhoudingen La-Chaux-de-Fonds, 1987

DEADLINES

February 20, 1991
OFFRAMP

The Offramp issue of technology would like submissions of work and writings that "will add to the confusion...help clear things up...will not provide a definition but rather a hundred possible definitions of what technology has to do with architecture and what architecture has to do with technology." They are interested in: "ADVANCED GENDER MILITARY THEORETICAL CYBER SOLAR PRIMITIVE SOCIAL ENGINEERING COMPUTER COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES." Send works and writings to Offramp at SCI-ARC, 1800 Berkeley Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404 by February 20th.

March 1, 1991
The Parks Council

The Parks Council announces the establishment of the Philip N. Winslow Landscape Design Award to promote excellence in the design of publicly accessible open space. Projects eligible for consideration must have been completed (fully built) in the last five years within New York City. A panel of five jurors to be announced will choose the honoree. Landscape architects and other designers who have completed an applicable project are invited to enter. For additional information and application forms, write to Winslow Design Award, The Parks Council, 457 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10022, or call 212-838-9410, ext. 233. The deadline for entries is March 1, 1991.

Luc Deleu, *Grand Triumphant Arch*, Barcelona, 1987

Luc Deleu, *Grand Triumphant Arch*, Neuchatel, 1983

PUBLICATIONS

Front #4
Reports of Explorations and Surveys of the Thirty Fifth Parallel
A Project by Dan Hoffman 21 pp. 19 illustrations. $10 paper.

Front #3
Project DMZ
Theoretical proposals by international architects and artists for events, strategies, designs, objects and ideas to provoke the elimination of the DMZ and the reunification of North and South Korea. With essays by Frederick Ted Castle, Ken Saylor and Kyong Park. 64 pp. 60 illustrations. $8 paper.

Front #2
BUILDING PROJECTS by Macdonald & Salter
Recent projects by the London-based architects, which express an explosive yet sensitive marriage between industrial machinery and anthropomorphic forms. Introduction by Lebbeus Woods. 24 pp. 20 illustrations. $8 paper.

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Kindly add $2 for postage and handling for one publication; $3 for two; $4 for three. Also, please make checks payable to STOREFRONT.

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LUC DELEU

Scale & Perspective
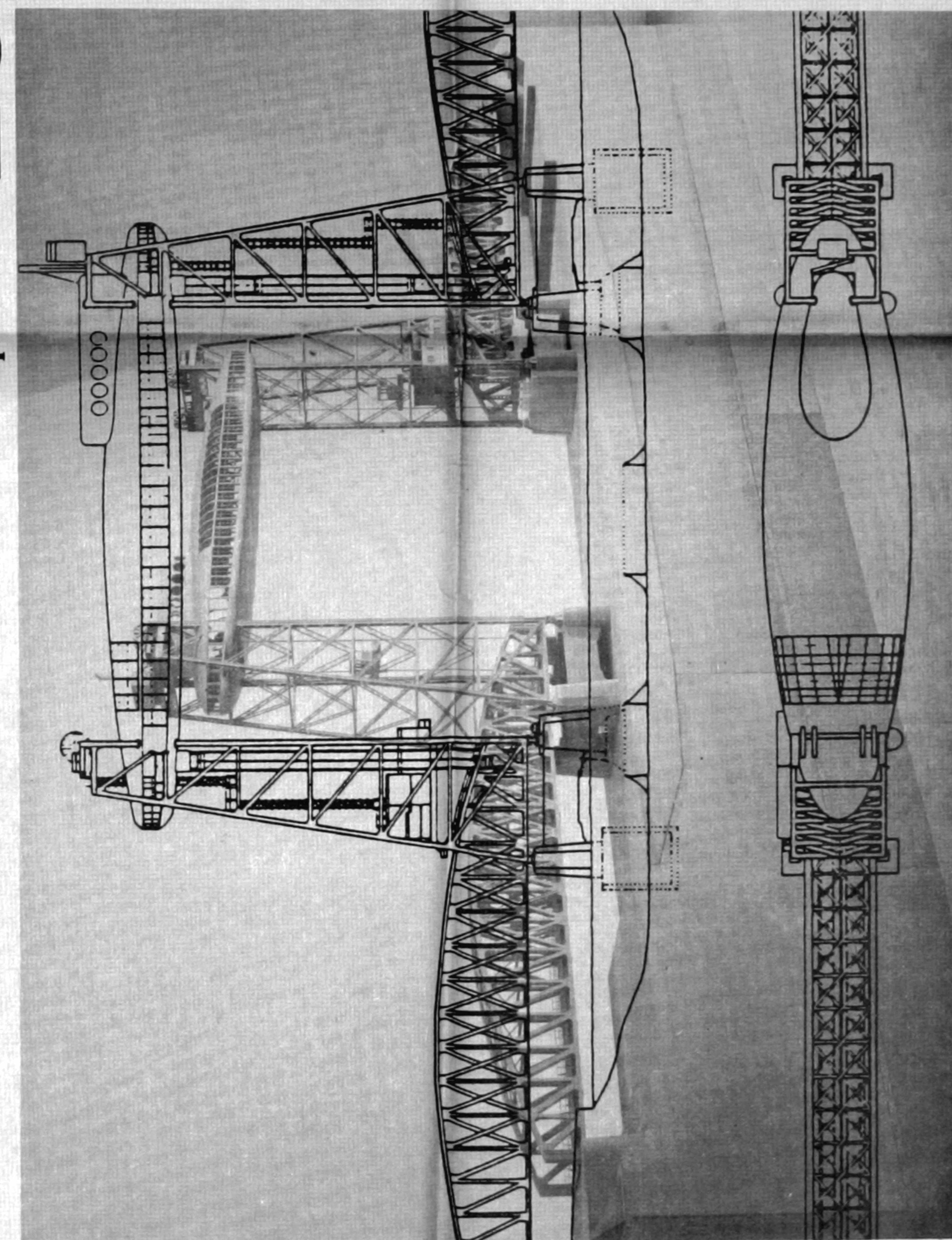
February 1-February 23
1991

STOREFRONT for Art & Architecture

97 Kenmare Street (near Lafayette) New York, NY 10012 212-431-5795

Luc Deleu, *De Hef*, recycling of the vertical lift bridge over the Koninginhaven, Rotterdam, 1990

Luc Deleu
Scale & Perspective
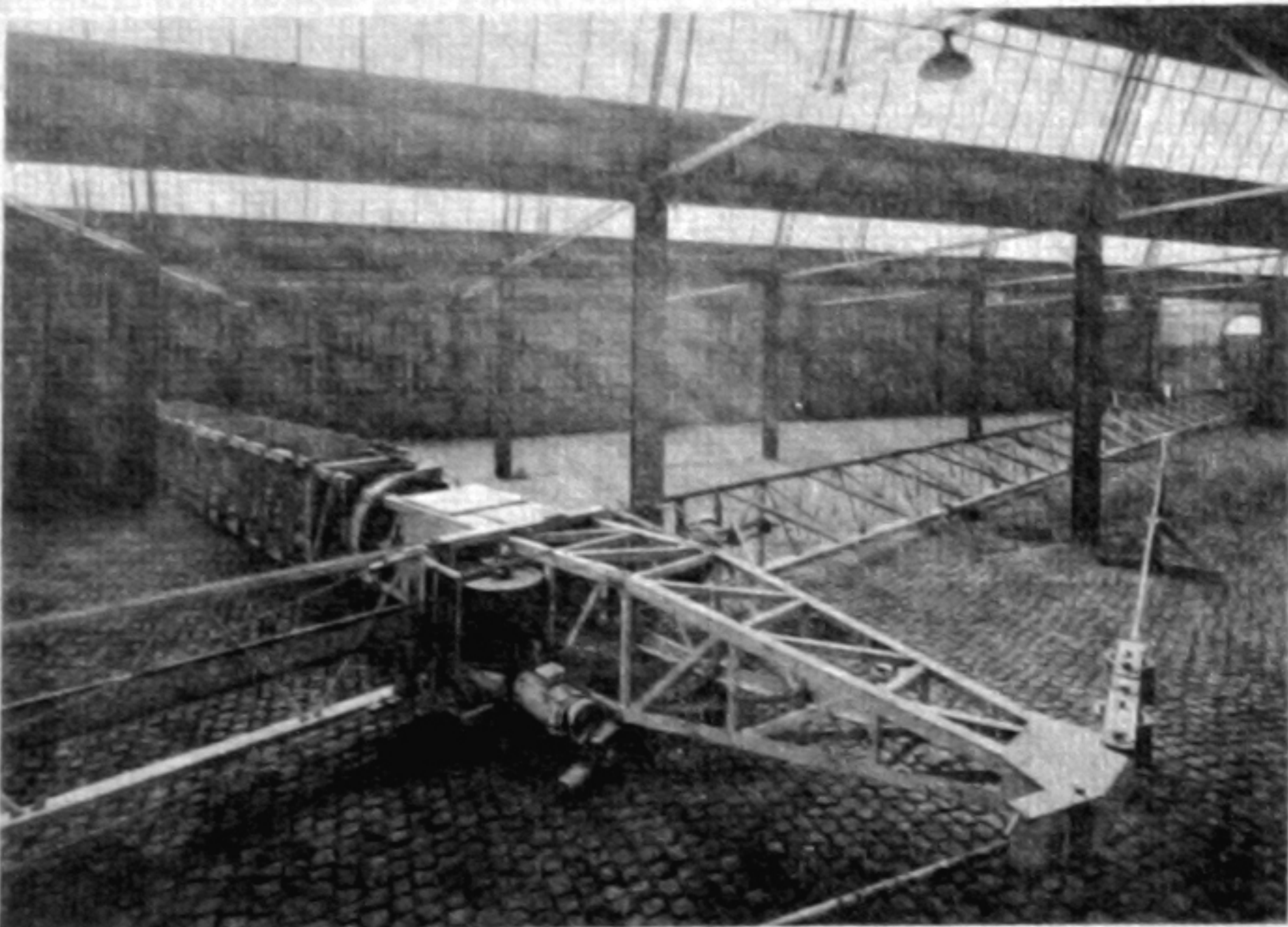
February 1-February 23, 1991
GALLERY HOURS: Tuesday-Saturday, 12-6 pm
OPENING RECEPTION: Friday, February 1, 6-8 pm

Luc Deleu, *Scale & Perspective*, Montevideo space, Antwerp, 1981

PROJECTS:

Scale & Perspective, installation experiments, 1981-86
Housing (&) the City, Barcelona, competition entry based on scale and perspective principle, 1989
Barcelona Apartment, 1990
Container Bridge, 1990
Mobile Medium University Revisited, 1989
Registry Offices in "De Hef," Rotterdam, 1990

Earth, Passengers and Buildings

In these times of great change, architecture could do with a change, too. The traditional place of architecture in society has become obsolete. The concept needs to be redefined. Its task, contents, aims, realization, and its emergence in social space must be re-examined.

The architect would seem to be the obvious person to question architecture, but he is the only person who doesn't. Although everyone knows that lack of destination leads to aimlessness, hardly any thinking has been done about the aims of architecture since the demise of the "modernist heroes." I can't get away from the impression that architects today tend to concentrate on details at the expense of the broad outlines.

As early as 1980, in my "Orban Planning Manifesto," I pointed out the necessity of looking at architecture on a global scale. This immediately and clearly points up the relative significance of a building, especially with a view to the total number of buildings. Since the explosive development of transport (and the transfer of information) in the twentieth century, infrastructures in the world have become all-important. And, although in many places in the world it has become almost impossible to create new waterways, railways, motorways, and airways, this spatial problem is hardly ever thought of as an architectural one.

Improbable as it may seem, the main issue is felt to be a *quantité négligeable*. All too often, architects are preoccupied with commissions, functions, side issues and objectives that are unworthy of architecture. And when architects do go to great lengths to design the most wonderful spaces, "earthly space" is left to its own devices, to be ruined and wasted by the monetary and political lobby, without any protest, interest or concern from architects. A strange reality!

Apart from its material function, architecture has a spiritual function and task. The imaginative power of architecture must create examples for the future. Architecture must express, record and pass on future perspectives, and it must stimulate the imagination: architecture as medium, as data carrier for future generations. It is not even necessary for architecture to be realized, and not every space needs architectural envelopment. The primordial requirement of architecture is that it should guarantee the freedom of the individual. The creation of freedom is the creation of spiritual space.

The fact that architects solve today's problems does not mean that architecture is only rooted in the present. It is also rooted in the future. After all, infrastructure and architecture have a long to very long life span. Fate forces us to make a choice for many generations to come. It is of the greatest importance that the individual preserve his or her freedom.

Urban development and planning should increase the number of possibilities, but they usually operate in a repressive atmosphere of what should or should not be done. In Belgium, building legislation, district plans, B.P.A. (development plans), allotment regulations, the Order of Architects, administration, building premiums, and social premiums usually have a repressive effect and are hardly ever stimulating. One example: the ecological call for the reduction of motor traffic will lead to repressive regulations (rush hour taxation, higher rates and taxes, higher petrol prices, traffic parking regulations), but it will not lead to improvements in public transport (more, better and all-night). The advent of the T.G.V. in Europe will not be used to diversify the existing network: it will, to a large extent, run parallel to the present tracks. Also the ideas behind the railway network remain national ideas, many tracks stop at national borders and there are amazingly few border crossings by rail. Antwerp, for instance, has no direct passenger train link with the Ruhr-area, although a track partly alongside the Albert Canal might well be worthy of consideration. The above raises serious questions as to the morality of contemporary architecture, which considers building as a value in itself. Architecture as dogma.

Architecture has two basic scales: man and the earth. Architecture as ORBAN PLANNING (the world scale as context) can, in a modest way, contribute to a substantial improvement of the general climate of life on earth. Architecture could see to it that "earthly space" is better organized, made more comfortable and intense. To achieve this, the distinction between "beautiful" and "good" (now indistinguishable in bourgeois parlance) must be restored.

There is a great need for new visionary models for the "earthly space." Contemporary architects may deny it, but the architect helps to shape society, for the simple reason that he or she has no choice but to work within a social context and space.

Complying with this ethical architectural brief is a challenge, but also a major source of inspiration for every architect. T.O.P. office (Turn On Planning) tries to keep these objectives in mind, and can always be recognized by a consistent adherence to them, rather than by a consistent form.

Between 1970 and 1980, when T.O.P. office was still a one-man organization with occasional contributors, the basis for this approach was created. I took it upon myself to question architecture and building in general. Soon I found out that, especially in the Western world, too much is built too quickly and too rashly; that building is the primary pollution on this earth; and that few people in the building process realize that earthly space is finite and that further annexation of farming land will lead to starvation of others. I also understood that the surface of the sea could be used and that architecture doesn't necessarily lead to immobile structures, and that mobile structures can be valid alternatives.

Then I examined how cities could become more complex, how they could combine more functions within themselves (thereby alleviating the pressure on the country) and still offer greater freedom to each other. It was a foregone conclusion: greater chaos means greater individual freedom and in this chaos a higher order can be recognized.

The urban development basis for T.O.P. office's work could now be formulated in a number of proposals (proposals are only proposals) and combinations:
Proposal for total decentralization (of Antwerp). Proposal for complete abolishment of traffic rules (in Antwerp). Proposal for complete disuse of the public lighting. Proposal to plant fruit avenues. Proposal to switch to 12 volts. Proposal for the implantation of urban dunghill(s). Proposal to introduce plastic money (in Brussels). Proposal for long lawns. Proposal for an urban sewerage (in Bruges). Proposal for mobile monuments. Proposal for an international dunghill in the Sahara. Proposal for naked Olympic Games (in Montreal). Proposal for urban wood production. Proposal to shoot nuclear waste to the sun. Proposal for car-free noons. Proposal for non-programmed TV broadcasts. Advice for vegetable boxes instead of flower-boxes. Advice for consumption strikes. Proposal for an irrigation system using rain water.
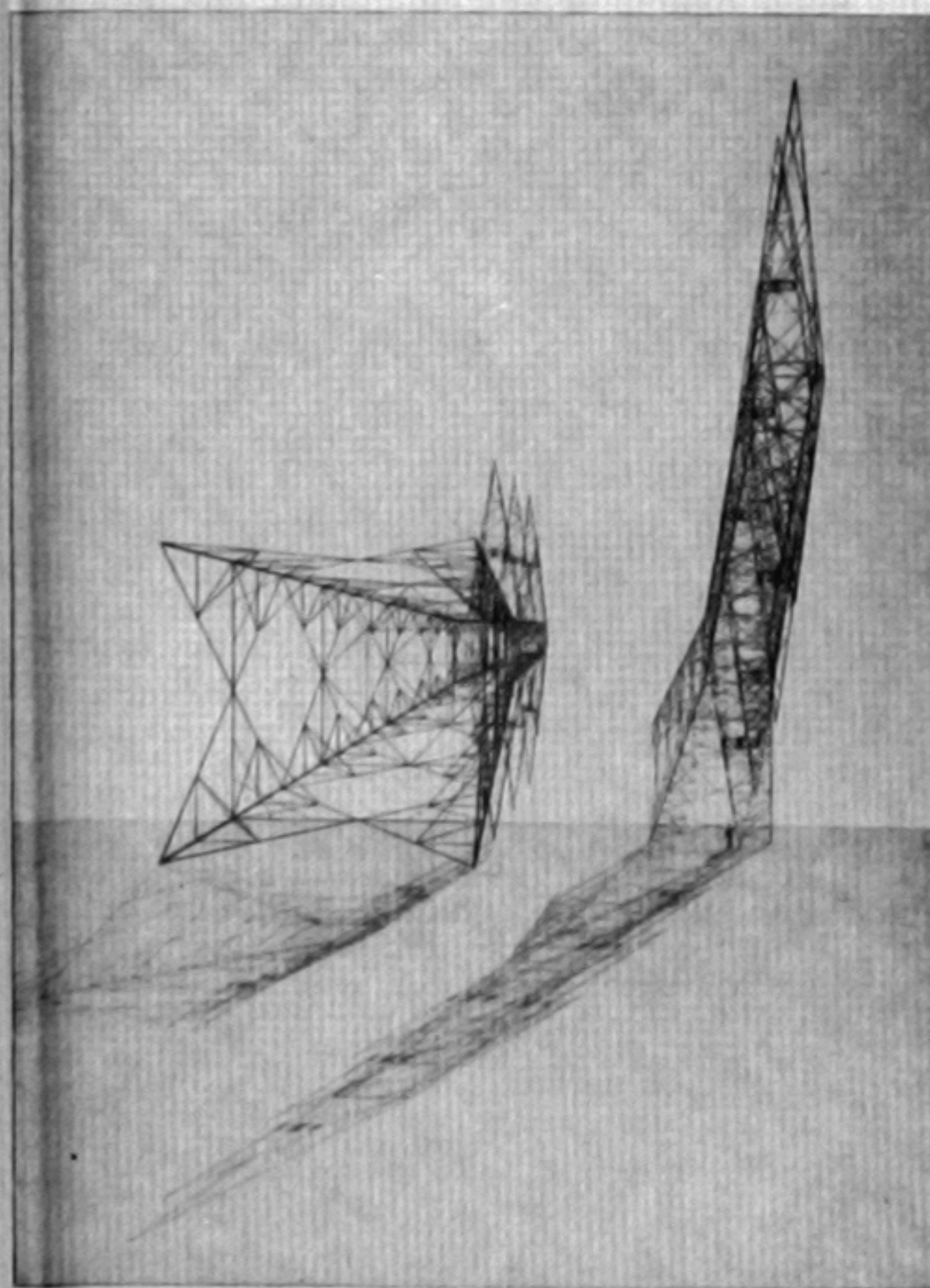
Proposal for visible telephone wiring and electricity cables. Proposal to declassify monuments and recycle them into social housing. Proposal for free masonry. Proposal for protection of weeds. Proposal for city beehives. Advice to close the zoo (in Antwerp). Proposal for abolition of the law on the protection of title and profession of architect. Proposal for roof horticulture. Proposal to switch to biological power. Proposal to stop leisure activities. Proposal for the restoration of the public transport. Proposal for road softening. Proposal for roof pavements. Proposal for urban agriculture, urban architecture, and urban forestry. Proposal for city orchards, city pastures, and urban cattle. Proposal for urban fishing ponds. Proposal for urban game.

These proposals were first visualized in a project for the Quartier des Halles-district in Paris. The principal idea is that our building a far-fetched programme preserve the district for the future. The present situation has a powerful character of its own and could, with minimal alterations, generate all kinds of life in and around this district.

This approach does not necessarily lead to a denial of architecture. On the contrary, where possible it can lead to a more intense kind of architecture, more firmly based in society. This does imply that the architect has to surrender his immediate building ambitions to a more theoretical and conceptual approach. (He could, for instance, play with Lego blocks or containers.) To demonstrate this, I decided in 1980 to develop a new urban development principle: "Scale & Perspective." Whereas, since antiquity, the axial, more or less symmetrical perspective has always been a well-known and much-used means of achieving monumentality, I developed an idea of standing and lying volumes, based on sleeping and waking man, which offers a more playful and dynamic monumentality and invites the visitor to explore the entire building, watching identical spaces and volumes from ever-changing angles. With a project based on this principle T.O.P. office received in 1989 an honourable mention at the Housing & the City competition in Barcelona. It is a combination of a standing and a lying volume, incorporating most urban functions and a wide "promenade architecturale." This project is the most elaborate so far.

This theoretical and conceptual approach, a continually recurring theme with T.O.P. office, allows me, as an architect, to assume a very radical stance towards the building customer, an attitude which is also a forceful indictment against the monopoly of architects (as laid down by law in Belgium). When I started up "Scale & Perspective," I also decided to build a great many ready-made houses. I realized the clients' drawings or sketches with hardly any alterations. The hand of the architect was absent. The totality of these houses was called "Luc Deleu manifesto to the Order." This project proves that it is totally unnecessary to give architects the monopoly of building; that in many cases their expertise is unnecessary and even undesirable. I am convinced that principals should only be given houses or buildings that they can visualize. I am even of the opinion that plans are not always necessary for building!

It seems more logical to me that, if one wants to have control over the building process, if one wants to make district plans, structural plans, development plans and such, these only make sense if they serve to enable the "family as principal" to design and build its own nest in total freedom. However, when structures (like limited liability companies, promoters, multinationals, political groups, central administrations) take to building, society must be able to exercise the strictest possible supervision, in order to protect the individual quality of the family from plagues caused by monocultures. In short, like the freedom of the individual is sacred, the containment of structures is necessary. So chaos should be seen as an acquired right of the individual, and order as the counterforce unleashed by the individual within an organization.

I feel that within the broadest possible framework the architect can supply the examples for this.

Luc Deleu, 1990
Reprinted from *Forum* (34/1)

Translated by Wiebe van der Wal.

Luc Deleu, *Scale & Perspective*, Ghent, 1986

Luc Deleu, *Scale & Perspective*

FORUM

Letters

For a Storefront HyperARCHITEXT

With an accumulation of textual opinions: statements, criticism, and suggestions from a known and unknown audience; with a growing series of statements, manifestos, and explanations by Storefront writers, artists and architects; with increased gallery-generated announcements and essays—with all these documents at hand, Storefront requires a system and format for improved communications if it is to serve writing, discussion, and text—literary/artistic dialogue—as fully as it does visual dialogue. Since textual exchange is, ironically, the foundation for architectural discourse, the neglect of such verbal/textual exchanges and its records in the context of Storefront's history fosters an information void. It is this void that Storefront needs to fill, creating a forum that will bring together new writers and those who are currently engaged in a dialogue revolving around the gallery, but who, precisely for a lack of a forum are essentially unrecognized Storefront participants.

Several formats are already in place at Storefront, such as discussions and publications. Yet they do not support the notion of a sustained, multifaceted dialogue about Storefront activities and their relationship to each other or the outside world: to politics, literary theory, philosophy, aesthetics, architectural history and theory—even anecdote.

Various electronic forms are currently employed (especially in university English departments) that could serve as a prototype for organizing an information/media system at Storefront, one that employs electronic paths and icons to frame co-authored documents collectively, providing a multi-authored history of the gallery and its satellite activities while also presenting a channel for unrestricted insertion of ideas, opinions, notes, and texts (eventually drawings, digitalized photographs, video, and audio etc.) by anyone willing to venture into the computer database. Loosely following the model of a hypertext document as devised for literary study and documentation—a system of computerized nodes and links of interactive text, graphics, video, and sound that can be entered and exited from various points in the hyperdocument, allowing multiple users to browse, read, or co-author information—Storefront could create and stimulate dialogue between the gallery's willing but currently silent visitors, its critics and champions, artists and architects, and its writers. And once on line, this hyperARCHITEXT could be available to any individual or group equipped with a computer and modem.

By beginning an electronic net of architectural information, Storefront would be stategically positioning itself to benefit from the growth of, and individual reliance on, electronic com-munication-media. In doing so, Storefront, even with technologically modest hardware and software, would begin to position itself not only as an architectural communication center, an organization with a process-documentary of itself, but also as an experimental, showcase model to other organizations for the arrangement and transformation of hypertext into hyper-ARCHITEXT.

Dennis L. Dollens
New York City

Storefront Note:
We share Mr. Dollens's dissatisfaction with the rhythm here of apparition and disappearance of artists and architects without a range of response. So, while we are as yet not ready to go on-line, we are currently preparing for publication a "history" of Storefront, and we will shortly be putting out the first edition of a newspaper to serve the larger Storefront community.
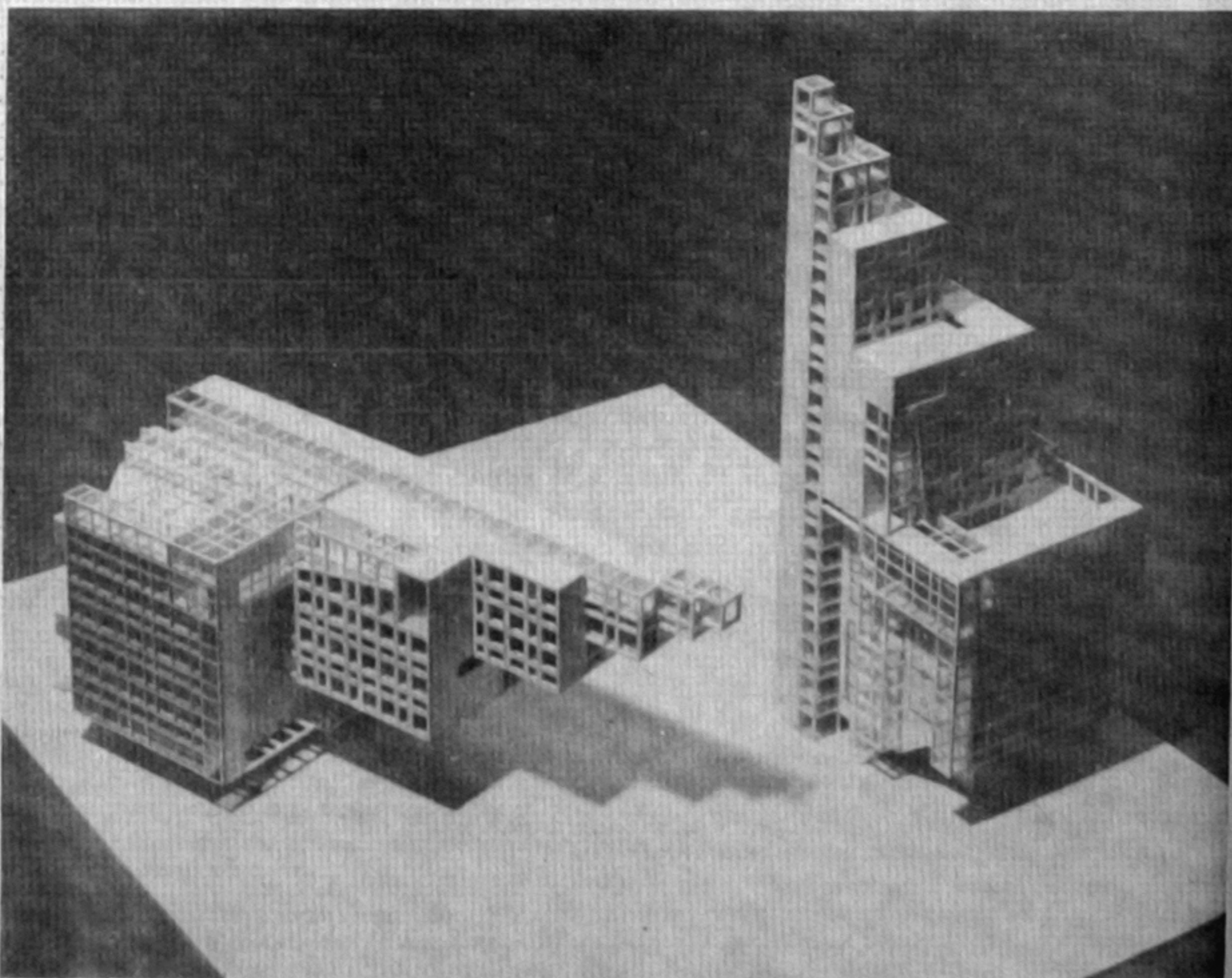
Living in Virtual Reality (Part I)

This is a claim to stake a new territory. A large uncharted alternative space anyone should have access to. While the issues of "virtual reality" and "cyberspace" have received much attention lately, their definitions are still somewhat muddled because the two terms are often used interchangeably. If the so-called virtual reality is definitely a cybernetic environment, cyberspace seems to me to belong more properly to the realm of sci-fi literature. It is the nearly-infinite universe of data stored in the mainframes that run the world, and where today's real hackers or the console-jockeys of the novelist William Gibson "jack into the net," in order to ride through, experience, alter or purely steal information. Of course, we want access to cyberspace by any means, but in Gibson's creations the access to such space is obtained by a direct mind-to-computer connection, a feat that by the current technological state of the art alas is not yet possible.

The computer production of virtual reality, while being an invaluable tool for the designer (from buildings to molecular structures), is both a "simulation," thus furthering the age of the simulacrum, i.e. a totally synthetic illuson, and a highly scientific and precise rendition of the physical characteristics of a non-existing environment which we can experience and interact with. Anything that can be imagined can be made perceivable as material. Virtual reality is an object of desire, finally obtained. One thinks of the words both of Georges Bataille: "With clear consciousness, I devote myself to the conquest of an inaccessible object," and of Baudrillard (in 'De la Seduction", here freely translated): "…from Machiavelli on politicians probably always knew that at the origin of power lies a matrix of *simulated* space, politics are not a function or a *real* space, but a model of simulation whose manifest acts are nothing but a materialized effect. (…) precise simulacrum hidden in the heart of reality, and from which it depends in all its operations: *it is the secret itself of appearance*."

Virtual reality is a space of desires. Alice's Universe. We can have it and yet it will never be a material possession: this is a very democratic principle, because possession and control (of anything) is simply absent.

We love adventure and risk, we long for new frontiers to be opened, new territories to be explored, but there will be no "conquest", no national flags will be stuck in these lands of the mind. The "other" reality we can occasionally attain by disembodied experiences or through art is here: all we have to lose are the limits of our brains. We'll gaze in wonder and we'll probably learn what perception is really about.

Gianfranco Mantegna

Upcoming Exhibitions

Pearson Post Industries Defense Entertainment Technologies
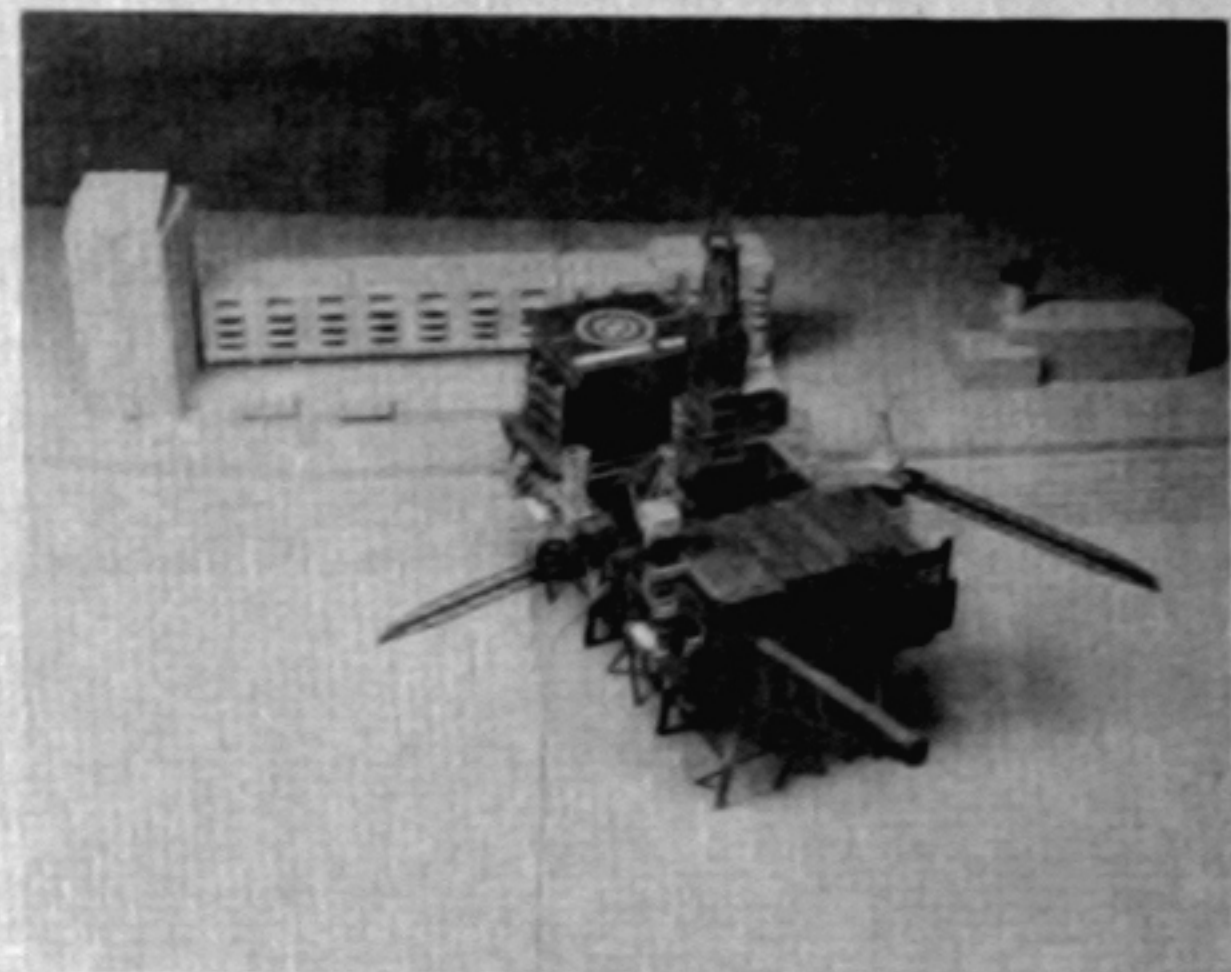1991

Empty Pedestals Project
1991

Mel Chin
1991

Günther Domenig
1992

Luc Deleu, *Housing (&) the City*, Barcelona, 1989